



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DHMH Praises Emergency Volunteer Health Professionals *National Volunteer Week is April 17-23*

BALTIMORE, MD (April 18, 2005) – Did you know that Maryland volunteers have been put on ‘stand by’ four times in the last 12 months?

Members of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene’s (DHMH) Emergency Preparedness and Response teams were asked to be ready during 2004 when hurricanes hit with full force in Florida, and in three instances this year: the Presidential Inauguration, the Iraqi election held in Prince George’s County and the recent multiple-shooting incident in Wicomico County.

“We are very fortunate to have many skilled volunteers ready and able to assist Maryland citizens during a disaster or emergency,” said DHMH Secretary S. Anthony McCann. “It is truly fitting that we recognize their dedication and thank them for their service during National Volunteer Week.”

National Volunteer Week is celebrated this year from April 17 – 23.

Our more than 4,700 volunteer workers include physicians, pharmacists, nurses, dentists and mental health professionals. They know they may be called at any time to provide valuable knowledge, skills and specialized experience to their communities during emergencies such as an influenza epidemic, a chemical spill or an act of terrorism.

“Public health is our number one priority,” said Dr. Michelle Gourdine, DHMH Deputy Secretary of Public Health Services. “These truly dedicated volunteers are a tremendous asset and play a valuable role in helping us keep public safety a priority in any emergency.”

The volunteers are part of a national effort called the United States Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). Eight MRC units are in the state, with two located in Baltimore City and one each in Allegany, Baltimore, Frederick, Howard, Prince George’s and Montgomery counties. DHMH hopes to add even more MRCs in the future.

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“Our goal is to continue to improve our processes and make it easier for volunteers to respond to emergencies throughout our community, our state and the region,” said Dr. Lisa Kirk, DHMH Director of Emergency Preparedness and Response.

MRC volunteers offer their expertise throughout the year by supporting local public health initiatives, such as immunization and prevention activities. When an urgent community need occurs, MRC volunteers work in coordination with existing local emergency response programs.

More information about the DHMH volunteer program is available by contacting Joan Lawrence at 410-767-7772 or by e-mail at <jlawrence@dhhm.state.md.us>.

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